

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Responsive to the Official Action mailed May 18, 2006, applicants have further amended the claims of their application in an earnest effort to place this case in condition for allowance. Specifically, independent claim 12 has been amended. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

In the Action, the Examiner has rejected the pending claims under 35 U.S.C. §102 or §103, with reliance upon U.S. Patent No. 5,492,580 to Frank, and under 35 U.S.C. §103, with reliance upon U.S. Patent No. 4,840,832 to Weinle, in view of Frank. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

As detailed in the Shipley Declaration of record:

"... the claimed product is heated to activate the multi-component binder fibers to form a plurality of fiber-to-fiber point bonds throughout, resulting in a less rigid board product. This is an important characteristic of the present invention, as specified in the pending claims, in order to achieve the necessary performance characteristics for the intended thermoforming application of the present fibrous board product ..."

Frank requires that the matrix fibers be "encapsulated entirely by the resin formed from the second melted fibers" (col. 6, lines 34-37). Frank's resulting composite is "essentially free of trapped air" (col. 6, lines 13-14). Frank teaches away from the claimed invention by teaching matrix fibers encapsulated entirely by the resin formed from the second melted fibers and by not providing a fiber-to-fiber point bonded fibrous mat that is cooled before subsequent thermoforming steps are performed on the fibrous mat at elevated temperature and under compression. Frank's nonwoven moldable composites do not appear to undergo nor

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experience the thermal history of the present inventive products, and thus cannot be assumed to have similar performance properties thereto, such as in terms of stiffness.

Weinle et al. makes a vague, non-enabling reference to a "heat stabilized" web provided by "passing heated air or steam through the batt" (col. 5, lines 60-62). Weinle et al. fails to teach a fiber-to-fiber point bonded mat, much less one that is cooled and then subsequently thermoformed as in the present invention

In view of the foregoing, formal allowance of claims 12, 15, and 19-22 is believed to be in order and is respectfully solicited. Should the Examiner wish to speak with applicants' attorneys, they may be reached at the number indicated below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required in connection with this submission to Deposit Account No. 23-0785.

Respectfully submitted,

By 
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I hereby certify that this AMENDMENT is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office To Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 addressed to Commissioner of Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450, Express Mail Label No. EV 843641119 US on **August 17, 2006.**


Colleen Davison